

# Chronic Wasting Disease

## Disease Characteristics

- Contagious infection with a prion
- Fatal disease of brain
- Long incubation period without signs of disease
- Signs are emaciation, excessive salivation, incoordination, lowered head and ears, blank expression, aimless walking
- First identified in Colorado, now in more than 18 states
- Prions persist in the environment
- Disease is transmitted by direct contact with an infected animal, contaminated environment, and possibly by consuming contaminated plants
- Susceptible species include mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, Sika deer, moose, and possibly reindeer/caribou
- Has not been documented to cause disease in people



Elk exhibiting clinical signs of CWD  
Photo Dr. Beth Williams

## Surveillance Efforts in Arizona

### Program Objectives:

- To conduct hunter harvested and targeted surveillance of both deer and elk throughout the state of Arizona.
- To increase surveillance efforts in areas bordering CWD-positive states.

### Method

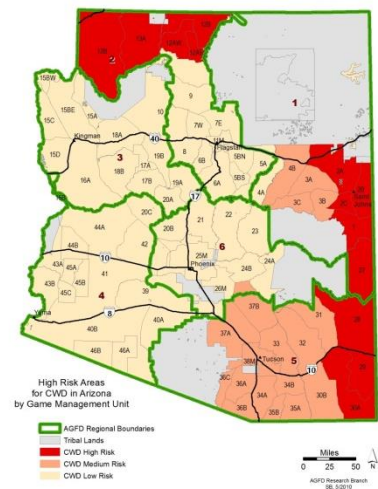
- Surveillance based on risk for introduction
- Detection probable if disease is present in 1% or more of sampled population
- Assisted by taxidermists and meat processors

### Results

- Has not been detected
- About 20,000 samples since 1998

### Hunters can assist

- Bring in the head of their recently harvested deer or elk to any Game and Fish Department office between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday
- Place the head in a heavy plastic garbage bag for delivery, and keep it cool and out of the sun.
- Please provide accurate, up-to-date hunter information (name and phone number) as well as hunt information (hunt#, permit #, game management unit harvested in, state, and hunt license) as this information is crucial should a positive CWD sample occur.



## **Prevent the introduction of CWD**

- The Department is concerned that CWD might be inadvertently brought into our state through the transport of infected animal tissues
- Arizona Game and Fish Commission Rule R12-4-305 allows an individual to possess, transport, or import only the following portions of cervids lawfully taken in another state or country:
  - Boneless portions of meat, or meat that has been cut and packaged;
  - Clean hides and capes with no skull or soft tissue attached;
  - Antlers, clean skull plates or skulls with antlers attached with no meat or soft tissue remaining;
  - Finished taxidermy mounts or products (hunters may ship their harvested animal to a taxidermist); and
  - Upper canine teeth with no meat or tissue attached
- Do not bring the brain, intact skull, or spinal column of deer or elk harvested in another state back into Arizona

## **Safe meat handling**

The following precautions should be taken when pursuing or handling deer or elk:

- Do not shoot, handle or consume any animal that is acting abnormally or appears to be sick. Contact the Arizona Game and Fish Department at 1-800-352-0700 if you see or harvest an animal that appears sick.
- Wear latex or rubber gloves when field dressing your deer or elk.

## **If hunting in a CWD positive state:**

- Bone out the meat from your animal. Don't saw through bone, and avoid cutting through the brain or spinal cord (backbone).
- Minimize the handling of brain and spinal tissues.
- Wash hands and instruments thoroughly after field dressing is completed.
- Avoid consuming brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils and lymph nodes of harvested animals. (Normal field dressing coupled with boning out a carcass will remove most, if not all, of these body parts. Cutting away all fatty tissue will remove remaining lymph nodes.)
- Avoid consuming the meat from any animal that tests positive for the disease.

## **Contact Information**

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